



HIV/AIDS Among Women in New Jersey

Prevention & Treatment Needs of Women

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is taking a toll on women in New Jersey. Women now account for about one third of the adult/adolescent HIV/AIDS diagnoses in the state. Women of color, particularly African Americans, have been especially hit hard and represent the majority of the infections among women (67% African American, 17% Hispanic).¹ Many women with HIV/AIDS are residing in poor areas, with low income and face limited access to health care system and experience disparities in receipt of care and treatment².

Prevention Efforts Must Focus on High-Risk Behaviors

Among adult/adolescent women in New Jersey, injection drug use has accounted for 40% of the infections, heterosexual exposure categories have accounted for 53% (including contact with partners of unknown HIV risk), and 7% didn't report any exposure.

The estimated number of women living with HIV/AIDS has increased steadily in New Jersey, and the ways they have been exposed to the disease have shifted. The number of women who reported injection drug use (IDU) has declined, largely due to a decrease in new reports. On the other hand, the number of women living with HIV/AIDS infected through heterosexual contact has continued to increase steadily in the last five years. As a result, more women have now been exposed through heterosexual contact than by any other mode of exposure.

Many women exposed to HIV through heterosexual contact were exposed by partners who were injection drug users. Thus, in addition to the direct risks associated with drug injection (sharing needles), drug use also is fueling the heterosexual spread of the epidemic. Contact with partners of unknown HIV status is also a significant risk factor. Reducing the toll of the epidemic among women will require efforts to combat substance abuse, in addition to reducing other HIV risk behaviors.

Current Trends (Data as of December 31, 2005)

- ◆ One in 321 women (aged 13+) in New Jersey is living with HIV/AIDS³.
- ◆ Among the 50 states, New Jersey had the highest proportion of females among persons living with AIDS at the end of 2001.
- ◆ In the year 2003, women accounted for 34% of new HIV/AIDS diagnoses among adults/adolescents in New Jersey.
- ◆ Women have comprised a consistent percentage (31-36%) of the adult/adolescent HIV/AIDS cases diagnosed annually from 1999-2003.
- ◆ New reported cases tend to be among women over forty. Forty-seven percent of the recently reported cases in 2005 are women aged forty and over.
- ◆ Three out of four women living with HIV/AIDS are currently 20-49 years old.
- ◆ Heterosexual contact is an increasing risk factor for women.

Women with HIV/AIDS in New Jersey account for:

- ◆ 36% of all persons age 13 and older living with HIV/AIDS in the state (almost two in every five persons living with HIV/AIDS)
- ◆ 36% of living cases among injection drug users.
- ◆ 56% of living cases among all those categorized as having acquired HIV through heterosexual contact, and 77% among those who reported sexual contact with an injection drug user.

Minority Women and HIV/AIDS in New Jersey:

- ◆ While accounting for about one-third of the states' adult/adolescent female population, minority women account for over 80% of the cumulative HIV/AIDS cases among all adult/adolescent females in the state.
- ◆ From 2000 to 2003 the rate of HIV/AIDS diagnosis among African American women was 24 times higher than the rate among Non-Hispanic White women. Among Hispanic women the rate was six times higher than the rate among Non-Hispanic White women. The racial disparity among women is greater than it is among men.
- ◆ About four of every five women living with HIV/AIDS in New Jersey are minorities.
- ◆ Between 1996 and 2003, HIV infected African-American and Hispanic women progressed to AIDS faster than their White Non-Hispanic counterparts. African American women show a considerably faster progression from HIV to AIDS than both Hispanics and White Non-Hispanics.
- ◆ African American women with AIDS have the poorest survival from AIDS diagnosis to death among female AIDS patients. Hispanic women survival rates may be overstated by under-reported mortality⁴.

Hard hit areas in New Jersey

- ◆ Essex County has the state's highest number (3,829) of adult/adolescent women living with HIV/AIDS among New Jersey's 21 counties.
- ◆ Salem County has the highest proportion of women (51%) among adult/adolescents living with HIV/AIDS, followed by Essex County (41%), Passaic County (41%) and Monmouth County (40%).
- ◆ In cities with 50 or more adult/adolescent persons living with HIV/AIDS, women constituted 45% or over in Salem city, Long Branch, Asbury Park, Irvington and Neptune.
- ◆ Essex (1,125 per 100,000 women), Hudson (534), Passaic (494), Union (388) and Atlantic (348) counties have the highest rates for women living with HIV/AIDS⁵.
- ◆ Asbury Park (2,353 per 100,000 women), Newark (2,128), East Orange (1,755), Salem, (1,644), Irvington (1,563) and Atlantic City (1,488) have the highest rates of women living with HIV/AIDS in the state⁵.

Data source: Except for cities, rates were based on the 2004-bridged estimates. Cities' rates denominators were based on US 2000 census. Mode of exposure data is based on modified risk exposure categories as described in the NJ HIV/AIDS report as of 12/31/2005.

For more information

- ◆ Call or write: New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
Division of HIV/AIDS Services
PO Box 363 Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0363
(609) 984-5874

E-mail: aids@doh.state.nj.us

- ◆ Call the HIV/STD Hotline: 1-800-624-2377
- ◆ Visit our website: www.state.nj.us/health

1. African American does not include Hispanic. Hispanic includes all cases of Hispanic ethnicity regardless of race. Percentages refer to diagnoses in 2003.

2. Two-thirds of women living with HIV/AIDS, who were not incarcerated at time of diagnosis, reside in cities where poverty rate is at least twice the state average of 8.5%, and per capita income is at least 24% less than the state average of \$27,006. According to the Office of Minority and Multicultural Health of the DHSS testimony for Congressional Black Caucus, 23% of Blacks and 28% of Hispanics under age 65 did not have health insurance coverage in 2000, compared with only 9% for Whites. 3 Calculated based on the number of women reported living with HIV/AIDS as of 12/31/2005 (n=11,571) and the latest state population estimate of women as of July 2004 (n=3,710,848). 4 Many Hispanic women mortality reporting may be affected by migration and lost to follow-up. 5. Women living with HIV/AIDS as of 12/31/2005 and women population per U.S. 2000 census 02/17/2006.

